

**To:** Abrams, Dan[Abrams.Dan@epa.gov]; Purchia, Liz[Purchia.Liz@epa.gov]; Harrison, Melissa[Harrison.Melissa@epa.gov]; Lee, Monica[Lee.Monica@epa.gov]; Allen, Laura[Allen.Laura@epa.gov]; StClair, Christie[StClair.Christie@epa.gov]; Hull, George[Hull.George@epa.gov]  
**From:** Ludwigsen, Emily  
**Sent:** Mon 8/10/2015 4:24:01 PM  
**Subject:** CO Spill - Clips

**Associated Press (via abc News)**

<http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/epa-colorado-mine-waste-spill-larger-reported-32985628>

**Colorado Mine Spill 3 Times Larger Than Believed, Feds Say**

Ivan Moreno

August 10, 11:45 AM

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency used better measurements to find that 3 million gallons of wastewater laced with heavy metals, including lead and arsenic, spilled from the Gold King Mine and turned the Animas River a mustard yellow last week. The agency initially estimated 1 million gallons escaped.

The EPA has so far been unable to determine whether humans or aquatic life face health risks from the pollution, but an agency official said Sunday that she doesn't believe wildlife is in great danger.

The sludge moved so quickly that it would not have "caused significant health effects" to animals that consumed the water, EPA toxicologist Deborah McKean said.

No drinking-water contamination has been reported because water utilities shut down their intake valves ahead of the plume to keep it out of their systems. Farmers also closed the gates on their irrigation ditches to protect their crops.

The discolored water stretched more than 100 miles from where it originated near Colorado's historic mining town of Silverton into the New Mexico municipalities of Farmington, Aztec and Kirtland.

There, the EPA and New Mexico are offering free testing of water from domestic wells this week.

The leading edge of the plume was headed toward Utah and Montezuma Creek near the town of Bluff, a tourist destination. The town, which is populated by a few hundred people, is surrounded by scenic sandstone bluffs.

Local officials prepared to shut down two wells that serve Montezuma Creek, said Rex Kontz, deputy general manager for the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority.

To keep water flowing to homes, the residential tank in Halchita has been filled with clean water hauled 40 miles from Arizona.

In Colorado, the EPA planned to meet with residents of Durango, downstream from the mine as water tests from near the city were still being analyzed.

Federal officials have not said how long cleanup efforts will take after an EPA-supervised crew trying to enter the mine to pump out and treat the water caused the spill.

## **CBS**

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/colorado-mine-waste-spill-environmental-protection-agency/>

### **Residents on edge as toxic Colo. spill larger than first reported**

CBS/AP

August 10, 10:52 AM

DENVER -- The Environmental Protection Agency says the mine waste spill into Colorado waters is much larger than originally estimated.

But an EPA official said Sunday that she doesn't believe wildlife will suffer significant health impacts from the wastewater from an abandoned mine in southwestern Colorado.

The agency said the amount of heavy-metal laced water that leaked from the Gold King Mine into the Animas River, turning the water a mucky orange and then yellow, is three times larger than its initial estimate.

The EPA now says 3 million gallons of wastewater spilled Wednesday and Thursday, instead of 1 million. The revision came after the EPA used a stream gauge from the U.S. Geological Survey.

CBS Denver reports that Governor Hickenlooper is preparing a state of emergency for the areas in southwest Colorado along the Animas River. Both the town of Durango and La Plata County have already issued their own emergency orders.

The agency has so far been unable to determine whether humans or aquatic life face health risks. However, EPA toxicologist Deborah McKean said the sludge moved so quickly after the spill that it would not have "caused significant health effects" to animals that consumed the water.

The discolored water from the spill stretched more than 100 miles from where it originated near Colorado's historic mining town of Silverton into the New Mexico municipalities of Farmington, Aztec and Kirtland.

"I'm here on my property and I cannot shower, I cannot cook, I cannot do anything with the water from my water well," Farmington resident Rosemary Hart told CBS News correspondent Mireya Villarreal.

The leading edge of the plume was headed toward Utah and Montezuma Creek near the town of Bluff, a tourist destination. The town, which is populated by a few hundred people, is surrounded by scenic sandstone bluffs.

Local officials were preparing to shut down two wells that serve Montezuma Creek, said Rex Kontz, deputy general manager for the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority.

To keep water flowing to homes, the residential tank in Halchita has been filled with clean water hauled 40 miles from Arizona.

Back in Colorado where the spill started, the EPA planned to meet with residents of Durango, downstream from the mine. The EPA water tests near Durango are still being analyzed.

The EPA has not said how long cleanup efforts will take. An EPA-supervised crew trying to enter the mine to pump out and treat the water caused the spill.

Without solid answers on whether the water is safe, many residents and top officials are still concerned, CBS Denver reports.

"My water well is 50 feet from the Animas River, and we're awaiting the results like many of you," said Sheriff Sean Smith at Sunday night's public meeting.

The images of the tainted river have Durango residents like Joe Genualdi worried.

"It's already hard enough to catch fish in the Animas, and this stuff, it's definitely not good for them," Genualdi told CBS News. "It's going to kill a lot of fish off."

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**Fox 2 Now**

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<http://fox2now.com/2015/08/10/mine-waste-spill-turns-animas-river-orange/>

**Mine waste spill turns Animas River orange**

CNN Wires

August 10, 7:54 AM

The city of Durango and La Plata County, Colorado, have declared a state of emergency after a federal cleanup crew accidentally released mine waste into the water.

An estimated 1 million gallons of waste water spilled out of an abandoned mine area in the southern part of the state last week, turning the Animas River orange and prompting the Environmental Protection Agency to tell locals to avoid it.

"This action has been taken due to the serious nature of the incident and to convey the grave concerns that local elected officials have to ensure that all appropriate levels of state and federal resources are brought to bear to assist our community not only in actively managing this tragic incident but also to recover from it," said La Plata County Manager Joe Kerby.

According to the EPA, the spill occurred when one of its teams was using heavy equipment to enter the Gold King Mine, a suspended mine near Durango. Instead of entering the mine and beginning the process of pumping and treating the contaminated water inside as planned, the team accidentally caused it to flow into the nearby Animas River. Before the spill, water carrying "metals pollution" was flowing into a holding area outside the mine.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife officials have been watching for any effects on wildlife since the incident began on Wednesday. They are optimistic that the effects of the spill on terrestrial wildlife will be minimal, the EPA said. Fish are more sensitive to changes in water.

Officials said they believe the spill carried heavy metals, mainly iron, zinc and copper, from the mine into a creek that feeds into the Animas River. From there, the orange water plugged steadily along through the small stretch of winding river in southern Colorado and across the state border to New Mexico where the Animas meets the San Juan River.

New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez was in Farmington over the weekend to tour the damage.

"The magnitude of it, you can't even describe it," she said, CNN affiliate KRQE reported. "It's like when I flew over the fires, your mind sees something it's not ready or adjusted to see."

The affiliate spoke to Rosemary Hart, who lives on the Animas River. Her family reportedly depends on a well to get water, and the spill has made the water unusable.

"We came out here together, and we looked at the river and we cried," Hart told KRQE.

The EPA and the New Mexico Environment Department said they will test private domestic wells near the Animas to identify metals of concern from the spill.

Tests on public drinking water systems are conducted separately by the state environment department, the agencies said.

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**NBC**

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<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/colorado-mine-spill-toxic-wastewater-leak-far-exceeds-first-estimates-n407091>

### **Colorado Mine Spill: Toxic Wastewater Leak Far Exceeds First Estimates**

Erin Mcclam

August 10, 11:43 AM

A spill that sent toxic water seeping from an abandoned Colorado gold mine and turned a river orange is three times as large as first thought, the Environmental Protection Agency said.

The EPA said Sunday that 3 million gallons of wastewater had spilled from the mine, and the sludge was still flowing. The EPA said that health risks to humans and aquatic life were not yet clear.

On Wednesday, an EPA-supervised cleanup crew accidentally breached a debris dam that had formed

inside the Gold King Mine, shuttered since 1923, sending a yellow-orange sludge leaking into the Animas River.

Water collected downstream showed higher than normal levels of arsenic, lead and other metals. In Durango, Colorado, the mayor assured people the water was safe to drink because the city shut off its intake valve from the Animas.

Still, "The river for us is an integral part of our community," state Sen. Ellen Roberts, who represents Durango, told MSNBC on Monday. "It's where people get married. People do their own private ceremonies along there. It's our daily life."

The discolored water reached New Mexico and by late Sunday was headed for Utah. Authorities there were planning to shut two wells that serve the town of Montezuma Creek. A tank of residential water in Halchita, Utah, was filled with water shipped from Arizona.

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### **USA Today**

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2015/08/10/navajo-nation-epa-mine-wastewater-spill/31399517/>

### **Officials continue to deal with effect of toxic mine spill in Animas River**

Joshua Kellogg

August 10, 11:31 AM

FARMINGTON, N.M. — As officials from the Environmental Protection Agency said the Gold King Mine discharged an estimated 3 million gallons of contaminated water into the Animas River, officials with the Navajo Nation, San Juan County and New Mexico are trying to keep residents informed.

EPA Region 8 administrator Shaun McGrath said Sunday the EPA is looking at the possibility of long-term damage related to toxic metals falling out of suspension as the plume slowly moved along the river.

"Sediment does settle," McGrath said. "It settles down to the bottom of the river bed."

McGrath said future runoff from storms will kick that toxic sediment back into the water, which means there will need to be long-term monitoring.

He added that "the Animas River has historically been polluted by acid mine drainage."

Mustard-colored water loaded with heavy metals, including arsenic, lead, copper, aluminum and cadmium, began rushing out of the Gold King Mine on Wednesday after an EPA team disturbed a dam of loose rock lodged in the mine.

The deluge of polluted water poured into Cement Creek and continued into the Animas River. The plume of pollution, clearly visible from the air and estimated to be more than 80 miles long at one point, reached Farmington on Saturday morning.

The plume of toxic waste passed through San Juan County on Saturday, heading west. It was expected to hit the Colorado-Utah border Monday morning, according to estimates from the San Juan County Geographical Information Systems department.

Officials advise residents with wells in the floodplains of the Animas River and the San Juan River downstream of the confluence of the two rivers to have their water tested before using it for cooking, drinking or bathing.

Carpenter said the biggest obstacle is providing drinking water for residents and livestock.

People and their pets should avoid contact with the river, livestock should not be allowed to drink the water and people should not catch fish in the river. Carpenter also instructed people to avoid contact with wildlife along the river in Berg Park.

County Executive Officer Kim Carpenter voiced frustration about the delay in getting information about the chemicals in the water. The data, he said, will "give us a big picture of what we are going to deal with and the long-term effects we will have to deal with."



On Sunday evening, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez attended a public meeting in Durango, Colo., after touring the Gold King Mine site.

Begaye told attendees his office will be aggressive in "putting (the EPA's) feet to the fire."

Nez said he felt like crying when he saw the mustard-yellow water stain in the river.

"Water in our region is very important," he said. "It doesn't matter if you are Navajo, if you are Hispanic, if you are Anglo. We are all part of this river basin. Now, we are looking upon the EPA with frustration."

Nez said the pollution will affect farming, drinking water and livestock on the Navajo Nation.

"A lot of livestock utilize the water," he said. "What are we supposed to do? Stand guard 24 hours to keep our livestock from drinking the water?"

Shiprock Chapter President Duane "Chilli" Yazzie expressed concern about tribal farmers and access to irrigation water.

"We're resigned to the fact that we will not get any irrigation water through our systems for the rest of the season," Yazzie said. "We're just accepting the fact that we have to face losing our crops. That is totally devastating to many, many families. It's very heartbreaking."

On Sunday morning, people walking the trails at Farmington's Berg Park echoed those sentiments, saying the contamination of the water was sad and disappointing.

Farmington resident Elton Daniels said he felt hopeless when he looked at the river after seeing photographs of it.

"I think it's going to have a damaging effect on the water we use," he said.

Officials have set up several potable water stations throughout the county for residents and RV and livestock owners to use.

Deborah McKean, chief of the Region 8 Toxicology and Human Health and Risk Assessment, said Sunday the EPA is in consultation with several other agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to determine when the river will again be safe for recreation.

She could not say when that decision will come.

Daniel Silva, a 37-year-old resident and local fisherman who attended the forum, accused EPA officials of "terrorism" for their part in causing the spill.

McGrath said such an accusation was "really not appropriate."

"We are not in the business of creating these types of messes," McGrath said. "We are used to cleaning up these types of messes."